

STEWART BRANDBORG, MAY 8, 2004
MAJESTIC MT, ALASKA
WILDERNESS FORUM W/ INTRO BY JACK HESSION
RECORDED BY ROGER KAYE

MR. HESSION: [Addressing a gathered audience] Well, we're coming down to the end of three days and two nights of very interesting and exciting discussions. I hope that this will turn out to be an historic occasion in conservation history, as we launch into the third big Alaska campaign for both the Wilderness, and the Alaska Lands Act. Personally, I am very encouraged. It's been a great gathering. I am honored to be able to introduce Stewart M. Brandborg who I first met in September of 1971. There was a Wilderness Conference there that the Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society and several other groups were involved in. There was "Brandy" lobbying the assembled dignitaries of national leadership. His message was, "The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act is about to pass ladies and gentlemen, and we'd better do something about it, or we're going to be left behind." This is was my view about six or seven weeks before it was actually passed. Brandy recognized the opportunity early on; for the previous couple of years at least. But in 1971, such was his understanding of the opportunity, that he turned his lobbying staff loose to work exclusively on the passage of 17-D2D1 amendment to the Settlement Act. Doug Scott, who was even younger than I was at the time; Ernie Dickerman and Harry Krandle, and there were others. But there were four or five of us and Brandy was our leader, and guru, if not patron saint at that stage of the game. He turned us loose and for the next six weeks; day and night, we just spent all of our time on trying to get this thing through. Ironically, we lost in the House but we prevailed in the Senate, because of the enormous national support for Alaska. I hope that we can do this again, and to show you how Brandy's participation turned out; I was reading these two reprints of articles, and I didn't realize it but apparently in 1976, Brandy was shown the door because some of the governors of the Wilderness Society thought that he had been spending too much time on Alaska. That's very, very interesting. But what that goes to show us is that while you can take Brandy out of the Wilderness Society, you can't take Alaska wilderness out of Brandy! So he's back! He's inspiring us, and leading us once again. It's my great honor and privilege to introduce my friend Brandy. [Applause]

MR. BRANDBORG: Well, the fact is that you can't quit. And once you have this terrible addiction, it's always with you. And I must say I am saturated with factual information, which I am not sure I needed in such a complete form. But I got it, and to me it's an ominous picture. But if nothing else, my presence here with the kindness of the Wilderness Society and Wilderness Watch, both organizations for whom I have caused and brought great challenge. The Wilderness Watch, you can imagine how disorganized they are, with my being the Treasurer! That gives you some measure. All of these years, since 1976, yes Doctor; I have been watching the Wilderness Society recover from my twenty years there. We have a nice, gentle, persuasive, effective leader in Bill Meadows today. But the recovery is still in progress after four or five people who preceded Bill. So I don't claim any short-term impact on organizations.

I am reminded of my good mentor, the long-term President of the Society Sig Olsen who always told the story of a lady, after one of these exciting sessions with a reception Saturday night and it's libations. She stood on a chair in the corner knocked on the side of a glass and said, "Listen everybody, I've got an announcement that I want you all to hear. I just want you to know that I feel a whole lot more like I do now, that when I came in!" This takes me to the fact that my colleagues at Wilderness Watch, if I say "#72" they chuckle and if I'm lucky I get 212 and they laugh. That comes from the fact that this pattern of a good friend, whose brother was in prison. He went to visit his brother. They walked along and somebody shouted, "91!" and there was great laughter, "508" and more great laughter. The doors swung closed and guards followed them right in to the inner sanctum, and finally somebody said, "12", and finally he said, "What is all that?" The answer was "these guys have been here so long that all of the jokes are numbered!" "Well what's wrong with number 12?!" Well, some guys can tell a story, and some guys can't. I almost lost that one! The thing I can testify to is that some people, and you included, can last a hell of a long time doing these things and sitting through these interminable meetings that are so productive and vital; and that the period of the early wilderness Bill was as equally heavy and ominous. We started with Zanhizer drafting this and I'd mentioned after Echo Park there had been this big drill to defeat the proposal of the Bureau of Reclamation's intrusion on the Park Service; a precedent that was unequaled in the annals of the environmental movement. That, after three years was won with the resounding vote in the House. Jack Kennedy stood on his crutches as the fifth guy in line. The other Senators vanished. It wasn't very popular to fight for the environmentalists but we got thirty-two votes in the Senate and that laid the foundation. Zanhizer wrote the Bill and we then faced the onslaught on opposition from the agencies; the Forest Service, the Park Service who said they didn't need it and it interfered with their administrative prerogatives. The U. S. Chamber of Commerce and a grand array of opponents that you all know; mining, gas, oil, lumber and all of these people. It was interesting that the good people in the agencies exhibits here, some of them contributed to the drafting. They had drafts and they greatly strengthened it. It was interesting that we had Tribal lands in the first Bill. And all of the refuges and all of the parks and all of the national forest wild and primitive areas were going to go in with the initial passage; subject to resolutions to take them out later by Congressional action. This was a great accomplishment. We were going to save all of the wilderness in one swell forward advance. Of course, that didn't happen. The fight of the ensuing eight years was of one, of working of course, with groups like this. The first hearing in the Senate brought in people from all over the country. What a wonderful representation right here! You backgrounds, your interests, and people, who love birds, people that fished and hunted. There were some cattlemen because they were resenting the intrusions on the ranges of the country. There were also naturalists and scientists. From that hearing, this massive document was built, "the bible". At Senate hearings, there was a grand alliance with one man who was on the Senate staff, Benton Staun who nurtured Zanhiser and me through the years, and was a master tactician along with our friends in the Sierra Club; Charlie Callison and the Wildlife Federation and others. The point in all of it was the strong consolidation of opposition. The House Committee was loaded with people unfriendly to wilderness, representing the commodity interests. We went, during those eight years through eighteen hearings. Many of them were in the field in places like McCall, Idaho

and Montrose, Colorado where our opponents rallied everyone they could get. We were forced to get out into the field and mobilize the folks like those here assembled. They came forward and they did one tremendous job. That was the first real grassroots mobilization experience of the Society. This was important because it showed me in no uncertain terms, what our only recourse would be once the legislation was enacted. The Sub-Committee Chairman of Public Lands, Gracie Post, said near the culmination of the battle, that more mail had been received on the Wilderness Bill than any legislation in the history of the Congress. From all of this, and the extensive mailings, and this of course takes us now to the national campaign for Alaska, to get our national groups after this foundation that's been put in place here, reaches a level to have them go at it hammer and tongs. Hundreds of thousands of pieces of mail went out initially. I think there were about five hundred thousand; to all of the groups within the conservation camp. That was the basic document, and statements saying that this was the law and this is what it will mean, "Here are the provisions, and this is what the opponents are saying. We want you to know that this is vital to the preservation of our wild estate." Those went out and the hearing that was 'the bible' also went out. It was an arrangement which I referred to the other day that members of the Congress used their [sounds like "francs" a federal mailing list], so the Wildlife Federation list, which we had available had three hundred and fifty thousand people on it, and also the Sierra Club. That went out, and subsequently as things developed and there were further refinements of the bill, they went out. I don't think we are doing that with the national groups like we need to. I don't know that we can ever avail ourselves of franc mail to that degree. There were several times when we got into scrapes with they discovered what we were doing and we thought that all of the hierarchy of the Senate and the House would come down on us with the IRS and of that. But we escaped that. It was a dismal damned picture. It was just as dismal as some of the elements of what we're facing in Alaska. The environmentalists persevered. The organizations just went after it, and people all over the country went after it. It was the first time when we systematically lobbied every state with a lot of phone work and a lot of mailings aimed at "Congressman Jones", or "Mrs. Smith" in the Senate. It was point specific. "Here is the issue, and here is the need." You always had to talk a little circuitously because of the IRS. 'But here is what the environmentalists are saying and here is where this poor Representative of yours is misleading all of us and getting us into trouble'. There was real contact work with the key members of Congress and real follow-up with the grassroots troops that had been mobilized.

At the culmination of the Bill, Wayne Aspenal, the long-time Chairman of the Interior Committee had said that the Bill would never pass. We succeeded in getting President Kennedy to call Wayne and say in so many words, 'Wayne, I've got to have that Bill, this is it!' That hurdle was crossed, but Wayne had recourse. He made it very clear that the areas wouldn't be brought in, in one package. They would be brought in through this laborious process that you all understand. There were the local studies, the hearings and passage up through the bureaucratic ladders to the Secretaries of the Interior and finally to the White House and finally to Congress with hearings on each side of Capital Hill. That left me, as "Zany's" successor, in the fall, after he had died in May, with what I thought was an unsolvable predicament. What the hell was I going to do with only nine millions acres of what we thought would be fifty, sixty or seventy million acres

in the Wilderness System; all of the rest having to come through hearings and local involvement. Of course, my reaction was to go the people because I had known them. There were people like these, with a great team of folks in the Society to community groups. That gave us exposure to the Sierra Clubs, the Audubon teams, the Sportsmen's Clubs; putting them in working circles spending weekends with them like we have here, to say, 'How do we do it?' You found of course great depth, great background, a lot of scientific understanding, a lot of just good, old-fashioned moxie on how to put pressure on their legislative delegations. They got out and they mapped, they documented the case and brought the proposals in the Congress. Suddenly, there was a tidal wave of these things and it was very hard to keep up with them. People like Ernie Dickerman, Rupert Cutler, Doug Scott, George Alderson, and always the Sierra Club picking up and doing their best, as well as Audubon and many others.

Now, relevance to today? In a lot of ways, as I listen to what we've come down on in the way of a specific work plan, I think this is just tremendously significant; what you've done here today, revitalizing this great coalition which brought us the national interest lands. Having been through that fight when it was tough. Jack, in his generosity mentioned some of the characters, but you all know without my saying it, that every time I did anything it was because good people within my circle, and they were a wild bunch of men and women, they demanded action. I was the guy who was stodgy and slow moving but I felt enough heat so I'd... [Keep moving]. You know what Gandhi said, "There go my people. I'm their leader. I must hurry!" They were wild and wooly and they kept the heat on me. They'd come in and say, "We've got to go for this!" This followed the Alaska Pipeline when it was showdown time at the OK Corral. By God, I couldn't get anybody to go with me to sue the Aliaska Company. We did know, and two solicitors in Interior were talking to me. One of them became Vice President of the Wilderness Society, Frank Berry. But they said, "You've got them! They've only got thirty-two or thirty-six feet to the mineral leasing law on each side of this line!" Of course they had submitted a thirty-two-page NEPA statement. Secretary Morton had signed off on it. It was going like a house afire. And they said, "Go get 'em dog, go get 'em!" But I couldn't get anybody in the other outfits to sign on except for old Dave, who had just been kicked out of the Sierra Club, but was a blood brother. He didn't have any money but he had a new organization. They signed on and eventually EDF [Environmental Defense Fund] signed on. The long story was, and you're always glad to see this made shorter on my part, we prevailed. They did have to write an EIS that did partial justice. Although we recognized then, as you do now, what would happen at Valdez. We lost that in a Senate vote with a fifty-fifty break and the deposed Vice President breaking the tie in favor of a NEPA override.

The culmination of D2, you remember more than I do. But it did take with the same kind of torch treatment that I got from these people that worked with me. And people like Jack; we did invest heavily in the Alaskan fight. That came back to haunt me. Of course, you'd never look back because the Alaskan fight meant so much to each one of us. The Society had a certain amount of turmoil, as most organizations do. Of course, I pause to say watch out for turmoil in your organizations. The most important thing we have is the human spirit and the good people. Slow up, take time with each other.

Understand each other. Bring folks in to close relationships and trust. It's so easy in organizations to get into squabbles with each other. We don't spend enough time because of the loads we have. The intensity of our work and the pressures we feel are great. And there are always a few things happening out here with the families. These things make it easy to not spend time in saying 'how are we doing?' Invariably in working closely with someone else you do a few things that aren't so good from that person's standpoint. You feel a few rough edges. You've got to have processes in organizations to meet those differences and disappointments that you deliver to each other.

The next hour and a half...[All laugh] The people in this room, how many have had any exposure to processes, any course, any bureaucratic training on how you put yourselves together into teams, and hold yourselves and stop to say, 'hey, are we doing okay? Do we have the trust? Can we differ? Can we come out best pals after we do differ?' Those are technologies that most outfits that I've ever been with have never been exposed to. In our grassroots work, we talked in the early years about the issues. We had enough money; a couple million bucks, and we could deploy teams to do what the Wilderness Society and Wilderness Watch have done here. I thank you so much for making this possible. I thank all of you, and those of you who have worked so hard for this. It's a turning point in Alaska's wilderness history. I don't make light of it. Anybody that's watched this attrition and the strategies of our opponents, couldn't feel anything but the deepest concern. You've risen; you've risen to pick it up. You are our hope for Alaska's wilderness. That's all there is to it! We saw that in addition to training on the issues; who's doing to do what? Getting the facts, reach the media; reach the Congressional delegation, the decision makers. There was the dimension of what you do with people. We finally slicked over with ecumenical groups; wilderness groups, labor, environmental and the whole range. We had sessions where we devoted our time to keeping our own energies up, taking care of each other and learning the processes of staying together and keeping forward motion while keeping all of the tenants that we saw practiced with Zanny and Sig Olsen and Harvey Brunam and Olaus and Mardy. Go down the list! There were gentle people! Their generous treatment of any one of us, immediately made you feel that you had been included in the circle that was drawn. You were a part of them. I think our discovery, simply put, was that people need this. They need reinforcement from good friends, close circles and they need to nurture each other. Then of course, you have this big challenge in Alaska. How do we go in to these tough communities like the one where I live and you live, and find good people? They are there. We know they are there. We know that most things in this world, and within the democratic system have been accomplished by a few people, so you bring those people in to the circle. And you have one guiding principle, which is to nurture the man or woman. Find out what she's done, what she likes to do, what her capabilities are and where you can fit her in to the forward motion of this campaign. Then you monitor to see that the individual, which is the most important thing that we have, has a part of our grand strategy and is a part of a team, any team, that changes the climate of the politics within these communities. I am not saying for a minute that in my hometown of Darby, or Ketchikan, you can bring a majority of people in behind us. But you can find those individuals who will document the case, raise their voices, meet every opportunity to

bring enlightenment to folks who need to know what we are about. Well, the coalition as we now see it seems to be on that road. We've reached a real culmination here. I don't see how more could have been accomplished, and how more could have been realized as a networking mechanism. I also don't see how we could have come together in a conclave where we talk from the heart and measured the depth of our devotion to wilderness. Wilderness is what we stand for. The spirit of the people and the quality of the people that we enlist is what sustains us. You can say all you want, but it is a remarkable constituency that we appeal to. It's a remarkable group that will come in and spend this time, and invest their lives in the cause to the degree that we see happening right now. I think we have everything going for us. Norman Cousins said, "You know, the one thing the American people at a time of great frustration..." and he's going to close in on me like the old eagle. "The one thing that the people have need for is the realization, as they look back on their lives, the realization that because I was here, the world is a better place." I think that's what we're talking about. And we are talking about the spirit that comes from the people who we set fire, that we involve, who catch on and come back together and say 'Look what we've done! Look what we are a part of! It's bigger than us!' It goes to the transcending things that our master spoke of here last night. This is bigger than us. It's for the public good and we made it happen. Had we not been on the line, it wouldn't have occurred. Teddy Roosevelt said, oh, you know the line, 'the noblest sport the world affords is the great battle for the public cause.' Well, you have signed on in your magnificent way and great things will happen! [Applause]